

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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INFO AMEMBASSY JIDDA
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SANA 4359

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, YE
SUBJECT: OPPOSITION TO AL-HAMDI

BEGIN SUMMARY: FOLLOWER OF LEADING YAR SHAIKH AND SAUDI
PROTEGEE, ABDALLAH BIN HUSSAIN AL-AHMAR, HAS SHOT YAR ARMY
OFFICER. IN POTENTIALLY INFLAMMABLE SITUATIONPRESIDENT
AL-HAMDI HAS ARRESTED ABDALLAH'S BROTHER BUT RESISTED ARMY
PRESSURE TO PROVODE SHAIKH ABDALLAH IN ANY OTHER WAY.
SITUATION IS SO FAR QUIET. END SUMMARY.

1. IMMEDIATELY BEFORE ID AL-ADHA (ABOUT 30 NOVEMBER) AN
ARMY OFFICER COMING BACK FROM SADAH IN FAR NORTH WAS HALTED
AT TRIBAL ROADBLOCK. ACCORDING TO ONE ACCOUNT HE WAS
REQUIRED TO PRODUCE PERMIT FROM ABDALLAH BIN HUSAYN, HASHID
CONFERERATION PARAMOUNT SHAIKH, IN ORDER TO CONTINUE TRIP.
WHATEVER CAUSE, ALTERCATION THAT ENSUED AT CHECKPOINT
LED TO GUNFIRE IN WHICH OFFICER WAS SERIOUSLY WOUNDED.

2. AL-HAMDI SUBSEQUENTLY MOVED SWIFTLY TO ARREST YAHYA
BIN HUSAYN, ABDALLAH'S BROTHER, AND TWO OTHER SHAIKHL Y
FIGURES AS HOTAGES. SANA PROPERTY BELONGGING
TO ABDALLAH WAS ALSO CONFISCATED. ARMY,
WHICH OUTRAGED AT AFFRONT ITS HONOR AND IMMUNITY, HAS
PRESSED FOR FURTHER ACTION BUT AL-HAMDI IS "PLAYING IT
COOL" ACCORDING TO MINSTATE AHMAD ABDU SAID, AND IS PUR-
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SUING HIS OLD GAME OF FORCING HIS OPPONENT TO MAKE FIRST

HOSTILE MOVE.

3. HAMDI WORRIES ABOUT SIMILAR MANEUVERS ON PART OF ABDALLAH, AND SPECIFICALLY REVOKED PERMISSION FOR A US DIPLOMATIC PARTY TO TRAVEL BY LAND, ON VACATION, FROM NAJRAN TO SAADA. (REVOCATION CAME AFTER PARTY HAD ARRIVED IN SANA AND AFTER YARG OFFICIALS IN SAADA HAD WELCOMED PARTY WARMLY). REVOCATION ILLUSTRATES DEGREE OF CONCERN ON PART OF AL-HAMDI THAT ABDALLAH BIN HUSAYN MIGHT HAVE DETAINED PARTY, FORCING AL-HAMDI TO TAKE INITIATIVE WHICH WOULD GENERALLY HAVE BEEN JUDGED IN YEMEN AS REPRISAL OR ULTIMATUM.

4. SITUATION AT MOMENT IS CALM. THERE IS NO FIGHTING, NO MORE THAN USUAL RESISTANCE TO CENTRAL GOVERNMENT IN TRAVAL AREAS. SAUDIS SHOW NO SIGNS OF UPSET OR INTERVENTION TO SUPPORT ABDALLAH VIN HUSAYN.

5. COMMENT: SITUATION IN NORTH, THUS, REMAINS VERY MUCH AS IN PAST YEAR AND HALF. GOVERNMENT WRIT DOES NOT RPT NOT EXTEND TO REGION. AL-HAMDI WANTS TO ISOLATE RIVALS RATHER THAN CONFRONT THEM, BRING OVER THEIR CONSITUENCIES BY DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS AND NATIONALIST APPEAL OF CENTRAL GOVERNMENT. IF PUSHED TOO FAR, HE HAS IT IN HIM TO STRIKE BACK VERY HARD EVEN THOUGH HE THEN CONTRIVES CIRCUMSTANCES TO EXONERATE HIMSELF. WE DON'T EXPECT AL-HAMDI TO OVER-REACT IN THIS CASE. HE HAS CONTRIVED NO-WIN SITUATION FOR ABDALLAH, WHO MUST EITHER STRIKE OUT AT AL-HAMDI OR PETITION FOR CLEMENCY.
SCOTES

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